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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fifteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 19 April 2017 from the Permanent Mission of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Angola to the United Nations has the honour to transmit herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments of Angola (see annex), pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251, in reference to its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period 2018-2020 at the elections to be held at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

In this regard, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Angola to the United Nations would be most grateful if the present note verbale and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, for the consideration of the Member States.

* A/72/50.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 19 April 2017 from the Permanent Mission of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of Angola to the Human Rights Council, 2018-2020

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

I. Introduction

1. In line with its internal democratic process, the Republic of Angola has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2018-2020 as a testament to its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights.

2. The Republic of Angola was a founding member of the Human Rights Council, having had the privilege of participating in the negotiations and approval of the institution-building package, and served two consecutive terms, from 2007 to 2013, in this august body. Since the end of its previous tenure on the Council, the Republic of Angola has remained engaged with the international human rights agenda by fulfilling its commitments to advancing human rights, consistent with its constitutional provisions, which broadly embrace the values and principles of democracy and the fundamental freedoms enshrined in key international instruments.

3. Angola has endured three decades of armed conflict, the consequences of which are still fresh in various spheres of its society. However, in the previous 15 years of effective peace, political stability, along with the consolidation of the democratic process and the rule of law, have been priorities of the Government.

4. The promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms are therefore an essential element of the country's diplomatic relations with all its partners at the international, regional and subregional levels.

II. State of implementation of the commitments of the Republic of Angola

5. The Republic of Angola has fulfilled the commitments made in the framework of its two consecutive terms on the Council, from 2007 to 2013. These achievements were consolidated through the following measures:

(a) Approval of the Constitution in February 2010, which fully guarantees individual and collective rights and freedoms and prohibits direct and indirect discrimination in any form. Under article 26 (3), the Angolan courts must apply international legal instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other treaties to which Angola has acceded;

(b) The justice sector is undergoing a broad reform process, aimed at strengthening legal mechanisms in order to improve the access of people to the justice system and at improving national legislation by bringing it into line with international legal instruments on human rights;

(c) Angola has strengthened the presence of the Ombudsman at the national level in all 18 provinces of its territory and has integrated human rights principles into its national education curricula;

(d) Angola has improved its cooperation with the United Nations treaty bodies and instruments by signing and acceding to the following international United Nations treaties in the field of human rights:

(i) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional Protocol, in September 2013;

(ii) International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, in September 2013;

(iii) Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, in 2014;

(iv) United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its additional protocols, specifically the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, in 2013.

III. Instruments signed and in the process of ratification

6. The instruments signed and in the process of ratification are:

(a) Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;

(b) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;

(c) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

(d) Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

(e) Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

IV. Cooperation with international and regional human rights mechanisms

7. Angola has improved its cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. As a result, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, paid a visit to Angola in April 2013. In 2016, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants and the President of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights visited Angola.

8. Angola has created an intersectoral committee on treaty reports, whose tasks include providing information on how the country meets its international obligations in the field of human rights.

9. From 28 April to 12 May 2014, the fifty-fifth ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights was held in Luanda.

V. Commitments and pledges for the 2018-2020 candidature to the Human Rights Council

Promoting and protecting human rights at the international and regional levels

10. Angola will continue to promote and protect human rights at the international and regional levels by:

(a) Strengthening constructive dialogue and cooperation with the Human Rights Council members and observer States;

(b) Improving cooperation with non-governmental organizations as a positive and important element of the dialogue in the work of the Council;

(c) Committing to implementing the welcomed recommendations made at the universal periodic review mechanism, recognized as the only appropriate and universal mechanism of the Council aimed at assessing and evaluating the human rights situation of all Member States;

(d) Committing to the universality and indivisibility of all human rights, as well as civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development;

(e) Supporting regional and international processes that seek to increase compliance with human rights principles and fundamental freedoms;

(f) Ensuring adequate and effective responses to human rights crises when they occur, guided by universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity while promoting international dialogue and cooperation;

(g) Maintaining the cooperation of the Government with OHCHR, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the United Nations and regional special procedures mandate holders and the Office of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, to promote and protect human rights;

(h) Maintaining interaction with civil society to better advocate for the rights of migrants and contribute to policies and practices affecting the human rights of migrants, in order to foster healthy public debate on this issue, since a sustainable human rights environment requires a vibrant civil society, including independent unions and a strong community of non-governmental organizations;

(i) Adopting a national human rights action plan.

Ratification of the United Nations human rights treaties

11. Angola will:

(a) Ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture;

(b) Ratify the conventions of the International Labour Organization, including those on migrant workers (Nos. 97 and 143), freedom of association, the right to organize and to collective bargaining (Nos. 87 and 98), domestic workers (No. 189) and private employment agencies (No. 181), and consider seeking technical assistance from the organization to ensure that Angolan legislation and practice are in line with these conventions, in the coming year;

(c) Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture;

(d) Ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;

(e) Adhere to the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, which apply to all categories of prisoners, both criminal and those imprisoned under any other non-criminal process, and which set out minimum standards for, inter alia, personal hygiene, clothing, bedding, food, exercise, access to communication with the outside world and medical services;

(f) Consider withdrawing its reservation to article 26 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

Advancing human rights

12. Investing in human development is investing in human rights. In this regard, Angola recognizes that the interconnectivity and universality of all human rights — civil, political, economic, social and cultural — are essential to the full enjoyment of those rights. Angola is committed to pursuing the measures below.

Right to education

13. Angola recognizes the right to education as a fundamental right. The education system has benefited from a considerable amount of the national budget over the years, based on the premise that all children should have access to free primary education. Angola is committed to supporting international efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4.

14. As mentioned above, Angola has adopted a national strategy for human rights education that is aimed at introducing human rights into school curricula in order to expand the culture of human rights in Angola, with the contribution of civil society.

Right to health

15. Angola is committed to expanding and improving the provision of health-care services to all nationals, with special attention to maternal and child health care as well as to those who are most vulnerable, such as people who live in rural areas, persons with disabilities and older persons. As such, a vital first step has been to focus on improving sanitation, sewage systems and the quality of potable water in rural areas and beyond.

Rights of persons with disabilities

16. The Government will continue to work to realize the rights of persons with disabilities guaranteed in the Constitution, in particular those rights relating to the access to health care, education and training necessary for a life of dignity. After ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and its Optional Protocol in December 2012, Angola enacted a national policy for persons with disabilities, a strategy for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and the National Council for the Protection of the Persons with Disabilities, which is the multisectoral body in charge of monitoring the implementation of the policies adopted.

Rights of children

17. In recent years, many programmes and action plans have been developed to help the education system meet the challenge of the changes under way. Special measures have been implemented to advance the rights of children. Angola is committed to strengthening and expanding a range of measures for the promotion and protection of children, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, with particular attention paid to implementing a

strategy for preventing and combating violence against children and universalizing birth registration.

Promotion of women's rights and combating gender-based violence

18. The Constitution of the Republic of Angola establishes equality between men and women and prohibits all forms of discrimination. National legislation has been strengthened in order to prevent all forms of violence against women. Angola is committed to supporting the advancement of women by adopting appropriate and effective legislation and policies to consolidate equal opportunities and non-discrimination in its society and pursue gender parity in key areas, such as education and health.

19. The Government of Angola will reinforce efforts to achieve its goals of advancing the democratic process and diversifying the economy through several ongoing political and socioeconomic reforms that seek to guarantee and consolidate the rule of law and the enjoyment of the fundamental rights of Angolans.